

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



Fayette Academy

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Mary Margaret's Garden

The Member

Fayette Academy (K – 12) consists of over 850 students and staff. It is located in Fayette County, the third largest county in West Tennessee. Fayette Academy's students conceived, created, designed, constructed and continue to maintain a certified wildlife habitat and outdoor classroom known as Mary Margaret's Garden with the help and support of over 350 local businesses and individuals. This project has taken our students on a journey towards environmental stewardship.

The Story

The garden had its beginnings with clipboard-carrying students, working as scientists and conducting environmental studies of their campus. They gained an understanding of the importance of close observation and an appreciation for all the living things they encountered. Their knowledge of the interactions between living and non-living things grew, as did their respect for nature.

Students conceived of the garden idea, then designed and constructed 9 raised beds and a garden shed. 4th, 5th, and 6th graders raise organic salad bowl gardens and earn their Junior Master Gardener Certificate. They can also earn service-learning hours through Fayette Cares and the Plant a Row for the Hungry program, which supplies vegetables to local shelters.

The garden project expanded to provide wildlife habitat in the Wings of Wonder Garden, which is certified by the Monarch Society as a Monarch Resting Station. The Serenity Falls Garden provides a water habitat for frogs, fish, and turtles. The Mystic Sands Garden has a Japanese theme, and the Flames of Knowledge Garden provides an observatory for evening Operation Sky Watch, a unique attraction for students to be at school at night with experts from Memphis Astronomical Society.

The Success

Mary Margaret's Garden has involved the entire school in creating and using the many aspects of the outdoor classroom it provides. It has raised environmental awareness in the school and the greater community by generating donations of time and money that continue to contribute to its success. Student volunteers care for and water the gardens and harvest vegetables for charities during the summer.



The Pollution Prevented

The local Soil Conservation District helped control water run-off from the school parking lot into a shallow creek that runs through the garden and fans out over the playground, preventing soil erosion. The 60' by 120' area provides 7200 sq. ft. of pesticide-free space for organic gardening, wildlife habitat creation, and outdoor learning at Fayette Academy. Emphasis on using native plants and non-invasive ornamentals prevents pollution of the greater landscape with exotic species.

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